DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 974 SP 038 269

AUTHOR Scott, Neil H.
TITLE Off to a Good Start: Report on the 1997-98 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick.
INSTITUTION New Brunswick Dept. of Education, Fredericton (Canada).
PUB DATE 1998-09-00
NOTE 36p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; *Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; *Mentors; Principals; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS New Brunswick

ABSTRACT

For the third consecutive year, New Brunswick's Department of Education, in cooperation with the New Brunswick Teacher Association (NBTA) and the University of New Brunswick, organized a Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in all 12 anglophone school districts. In 1998, data were collected using surveys from beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators. Results indicated that nearly all participants in 2-day mentor training workshops were satisfied with the training. Most respondents were satisfied with district-wide and school-level activities organized for professional development. About three-quarters of beginning teachers indicated that insufficient time created problems in the mentoring program. About 30 percent said that different teaching assignments for mentors and partners caused problems. Mentors reported similar problems. Principals and coordinators complained about confusion over funding. About 82 percent of beginning teachers believed they benefited from the BTIP, which was a drop from 96 percent in 1997. Reduced satisfaction levels apparently resulted from a combination of several factors, including significantly increased numbers of participants, reduced NBTA funding, confusion over funding arrangements, increased numbers of mismatched partners, and shortages of mentors. The report makes 13 recommendations. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 426 974

Off to a Good Start: Report on the 1997-98 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

by

Neil H. Scott
Department of Social Sciences/Education
University of New Brunswick (Saint John)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Scott

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

September 1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

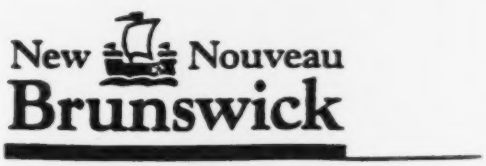

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ii

Introduction to the Study 1

The Database 1
Structure and Funding for the BTIP 2

Examining the Data 3

Professional Development at the Provincial Level 3
Professional Development at the District Level 5
Professional Development at the Local School Level 5
Problems Identified by Beginning Teachers and Mentors 8
Perceptions of Roles and Feelings of Support 11
Principals 11
District Coordinators 12
Use of Recommended Resources 13
Perceived Benefits of the BTIP to Participants 14
Beginning Teachers 15
Mentors 19
Principals 21
District Coordinators 22

Reflecting on the Data 23

Addressing Ongoing Issues 23
Funding 23
Sustaining Program Growth 24
Servicing specialist, itinerant, and part-time teachers 25
AEFNB participation 25
Sharing Ideas 26
Cause for Celebration 26

Recommendations 27

References 29

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the third consecutive year, the Department of Education, in cooperation with the New Brunswick Teachers' Association and the University of New Brunswick, organized a Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in all 12 of the anglophone school districts in the province. Two hundred and ten beginning teachers were matched with 203 mentors (experienced teachers) in 108 public schools. This represents an increase of 85 beginning teachers over the previous year and 54 more than the first year of the program. The database for this report consists of survey responses from four groups of participants (% return in brackets): beginning teachers (83%), mentors (75%), principals (74%), district coordinators (100%).

Provincial Professional Development. Approximately 175 people, mostly mentors, attended the 2-day Mentor Training Workshops held in Fredericton in September. A higher percentage of mentors (67-74%) attended than in the two previous workshops (52% & 25%). However, mentors' attendance in Districts 2,13, and 14 was less than 50%. Ninety-nine percent of those who attended were satisfied with the quality of this workshop.

District Professional Development. BTIP coordinators in all districts organized workshops for beginning teachers and mentors to orient them to program goals and to discuss appropriate professional activities for the partners. Additional district meetings or workshops for the participants were reported in all districts, with one exception. The quality and number of district-organized activities appeared to be comprehensive and consistent across the province. Overall, 98.5% of respondents reported satisfaction with both the district-wide activities and those organized at the school level by the mentor and/or beginning teachers.

School Level Professional Development. The report compares the level of participation by beginning teachers in specific low and high-risk professional activities at the school level during the last three years. Low-risk activities included informal contacts between mentors and mentees, sharing resources or ideas, and discussion of specific topics such as curriculum, assessment, classroom management, or school policies. Compared to 1997, the new data revealed significantly lower participation in five of the seven categories. Many of the 1998 participation rates were strikingly similar to those in 1996, the first year the BTIP was implemented province-wide. Participation rates for sharing and discussion were about 90%, while informal contacts at school approached 99%, an improvement over both previous years. The data showed no significant changes in the higher-risk activities. Approximately 72% of new teachers observed colleagues teach; 56% observed their mentors teach; 58% were observed by their mentors; 74% received feedback concerning their teaching from their mentors. Beginning teachers requested increased participation in these higher-risk professional activities.

Problem Identification. Nearly 70% of beginning teachers indicated that insufficient time created problems; different teaching assignments for mentors and partners caused problems for 30%; approximately 29% reported that they experienced difficulty accessing NBTA funds; 17% found BTIP expectations unclear, and 16% indicated that the location of their room relative to

their mentor's created inconveniences. Personal incompatibility problems were only reported in 2% of the partnerships. While the pattern of problem identification was similar to previous years, significant increases occurred in time, matching partners' teaching profiles, and funding difficulties. Mentors reported similar problems to the beginning teachers. Principals complaints concentrated on inadequate information about the BTIP and confusion over funding. The coordinators unanimously called for improvements in the NBTA funding arrangements. There appeared to be a need to provide more training and support for coordinators, especially newly-appointed ones.

Perceived Value of the BTIP Approximately 82% of the beginning teachers indicated they felt they had benefited from the BTIP. This was a dramatic drop from 1997 when 96% expressed overall satisfaction. Expressions of discontent were reported from 7 of the 12 districts. Despite the reduced level of personal satisfaction, 94.5% of beginning teachers recommended the continuation of the Program. This figure was lower than previous years. Mentors, principals, and coordinators seemed more positive about the BTIP, with 96%, 99%, and 100% respectively recommending continuation. Many individuals from all four groups of participants wrote articulate testimonials attesting to both the short and long-term benefits of the BTIP for teachers.

Conclusions. Despite improved participation in mentor training provincially and more comprehensive and consistent preparation of mentors and beginning teachers at the district level, significantly lower numbers of new teachers reported benefiting from the BTIP in 1998. Although explanations are speculative, the reduced levels of satisfaction appear to be a combination of several related factors: significantly increased numbers of participants, reduced NBTA funding to pairs of teachers, confusion over funding arrangements, increased numbers of mis-matched partners, and even shortages of mentors. Large numbers of participants in some districts created overwhelming challenges for district coordinators -- some of whom had no prior experience and limited preparation for their role. The report suggests that while the Steering Committee should be congratulated for its response to previous criticisms and suggestions, it must decide whether it is able to sustain and support the unlimited growth of the BTIP. For this to be successful, the Report suggests that particular attention will have to be paid to training and support for district coordinators, funding levels and arrangements, mentor recruitment and training, and matching mentors with partners. Improving communication with and the involvement of principals is another ongoing issue.

Although the BTIP appears to have experienced growing pains in 1998, the Program is based on sound principles and the overall value of the Program to teachers in the province is not in question. The organizing institutions have much to be proud of, but this is not a time to rest on ones' laurels. Goodwill and hard work will be needed by the various stakeholders in order to eliminate some irritants, and reduce the impact of others. It is very important to make all educational decision-makers aware of the significant potential of the BTIP, especially during the next 5 years when large numbers of experienced teachers are eligible to retire. The cooperation and creative suggestions of educational leaders will help insure the continuing success of a program which is expected to have a positive impact on the next generation of New Brunswick teachers.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Recommendations

1. The Steering Committee should seek ways to provide additional training and support for district coordinators at the provincial level. One option is to organize a Coordinators' Workshop which would focus on such topics as financial accounting, mentor recruitment and selection, improving public relations and communication with principals, and sharing ideas and strategies for planning inservice sessions with partner teachers.

2. The Chair of the Steering Committee should advise superintendents and/or directors of education of the importance of continuity among BTIP coordinators and of the need to insure that these individuals are provided adequate time and resources to perform their tasks.

3. The Chair of the Steering Committee should also encourage executive officers to appoint suitable BTIP coordinators in the Spring so they can make preparations when they have the most effect.

4. Encourage coordinators to hold information sessions with principals to outline options for their involvement in the BTIP. In addition to encouraging their participation, coordinators should keep principals well informed of ongoing BTIP activities within the district.

5. Before the end of the school year, coordinators should convene a meeting of administrators who will be involved with mentor selection in the district. The considerations for mentor selection should be reviewed and plans made for mentor recruitment.

6. Before the end of the school year, coordinators and/or administrators should provide information sessions and possibly limited inservice to any teachers interested in acting as mentors. In this way a pool of mentors can be established to support both new teachers who have been hired and those who will join the faculty later.

7. Continue to solicit mentors from volunteer teachers (not principals) who have at least 5 years teaching experience, show a personal interest in the program, demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, display above average teaching skills, and have similar teaching assignments in the same school as their partners.

8. District Coordinators should be expected to provide a Fall Orientation Workshop for mentors and beginning teachers. In addition, one or more opportunities for group interaction and/or training are recommended at the district level during the school year.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

9. Every new mentor should be expected to attend an inservice session which provides details of the Program goals, expectations, funding, and activities recommended for partners. Special arrangements may have to be made to accommodate late-comers.

10. The Steering Committee should continue to seek ways to streamline and simplify BTIP funding arrangements at the district level for organizers and participants.

11. The Steering Committee should develop contingency plans to deal with the problems created by rapid expansion of the BTIP.

12. Coordinators should be asked to continue to coordinate an annual evaluation of the BTIP in their districts, both for their own benefit and that of the Steering Committee.

13. The UNBSJ representative on the Steering Committee, in consultation with other Committee members, should develop appropriate questionnaires, analyse their contents, and provide a written report to the Chair of the Steering Committee.

Off to a Good Start: A Report on the 1997-98 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

For the third consecutive year the New Brunswick Department of Education has organized an induction program for beginning teachers in all 12 anglophone districts of the province. Prior to 1996, pilot projects were organized only in School Districts 12 and 17. Previous reports (Scott, Smith, & Grobe, 1995; Scott, 1996; and Scott, 1997) provide details of these undertakings. These reports are available from either the Department of Education, Fredericton, or the ERIC Database (Resources in Education). The purpose of this document is to report on the perceptions of participants in the Beginning Teachers' Induction Program (BTIP) for the 1997-98 school year, to compare their responses to that of previous years, to evaluate the program, and to make recommendations for future directions.

Introduction to the Study

The Database

This report is based on data collected from the participants: beginning teachers, mentors, district coordinators, and school principals. Each of these groups was asked to respond to a separate questionnaire near the end of the school year. The questionnaires were distributed at the district level by the coordinators. In the case of the mentors' and beginning teachers' surveys, most of the coordinators asked them to complete their evaluations during the final group activity. The coordinators subsequently collected the questionnaires in their district and forwarded the original survey forms to the author. Coordinators were encouraged to make summaries of the data and/or photocopy the surveys to assist in their own local evaluation. It was felt that giving them direct access to the survey results in their district would provide immediate feedback to them which would prove useful for future BTIP planning and implementation. Furthermore, the local results should provide important details specific to each district which would not always be evident in this provincial report. This format may account for the high rates of return reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Numbers, categories, and percentage returns of participants in the BTIP Survey

	Categories of participants			
	beginning teachers	**mentors**	**principals**	**coordinators**
number of participants	210	203	108	12
number of survey returns	174	153	80	12
percentage of returns	83%	75%	74%	100%

Altogether, 210 beginning teachers were paired with experienced teachers/mentors in 1997-98. This represents a marked growth in the program from the previous year when 125 pairs of teachers participated. In the first year of the BTIP, 156 beginning teachers were enrolled in the Program, but only 147 of them were paired with a mentor. You will note what appears to be a similar discrepancy in Table 1 -- the number of mentors and beginning teachers does not match. In fact, while there was a shortage of mentors, every beginning teacher was paired with a mentor. To accomplish this, seven experienced teachers in District 2 and one in District 17 acted as mentors for two beginning teachers each.

Although we use the term "beginning teacher" to refer to the new teachers paired with experienced mentors, approximately 42% of the "beginning teachers" had taught previously as supply teachers or in another province. However, this was the first year of teaching for 58% of the beginning teachers and all of them were considered new teachers in their school districts.

All 12 of the anglophone school districts participated in the 1997-98 induction program. Thanks to the cooperation of the district coordinators, data was received from every district. The number of partners ranged from a low of two in School District 15 (Bathurst area) to a high of 41 in the Moncton area (District 2). The average number of pairs per district was 17.5. Table 2 shows the distribution of the induction partnerships among the school districts.

Table 2

Distribution of induction pairs among the anglophone school districts

school district	number of induction pairs
2	41
4	15
6	21
8	30
10	21
12	16
13	10
14	11
15	2
16	18
17	11
18	14

Structure and Funding for the BTIP

The Steering Committee of the BTIP is a chaired by Tom Hanley, Assistant-director of Professional Development and Innovations, Department of Education. In addition to one

representative from the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA) and one from the University of New Brunswick, each of the 12 anglophone districts sends one representative, usually a district supervisor. The latter coordinates the program in his or her own district.

Funding is provided by both the Department of Education and the NBTA which represents only anglophone teachers in the province. The Department transfers to each district $500 for every pair of participants, based on full-time equivalent (FTE) beginning teachers. District Coordinators are responsible for allocating this money to the pairs of beginning teachers and mentors. In a memorandum to district coordinators, dated October 30, 1996, Mr. Hanley reminded coordinators of the intended uses for these funds: a) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to visit each others' classrooms; b) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to meet to discuss materials, to review videos, and to dialogue about teaching; c) purchasing materials that focus on the teaching process and support the professional growth of beginning teachers.

In addition, the NBTA makes monies available to each pair of teachers (based on FTE beginning teachers), but they must apply directly to the NBTA professional development officer in order to receive it. Although it was originally suggested that $300 (the amount in 1996-97) would be available to each pair in 1997-98, the actual grant was reduced to approximately $225.

Each year it has been the practice of the Provincial Steering Committee to invite all experienced teachers who have agreed to act as mentors to a two-day Mentor Training Workshop. This year the workshop was held in Fredericton on September 18 and 19. Approximately 175 mentors, district coordinators, and principals attended. This was a much larger group than had attended previous sessions and consequently the venue had to be changed at the last minute to accommodate a group of this size. Beginning teachers are not invited to this workshop. The purpose is to inform mentors about the expectations of the BTIP, to provide an opportunity to hear from successful beginning teacher-mentor pairs from the previous year, and to learn skills which will facilitate their role as mentor. The Steering Committee expects that district coordinators will arrange for subsequent training sessions for mentors, beginning teachers, and possibly principals, in each district.

Examining the Data

Professional Development at the Provincial Level

While we know that about 175 people attended the provincial Mentor Training Workshop, it is impossible to determine exactly what percentage of the mentor teachers were present. Responses to the mentor survey suggest 67% attendance; the coordinators' survey suggests 74%. The latter figure seems more likely, given the total attendance. Ten of the 12 coordinators attended (one had not been appointed at the time of the workshop). I estimate that approximately 15 to 20 principals were also present at the Workshop.

The percentage of mentors (67-74%) attending the Mentor Training Workshop held in the Fall of 1997 showed a significant increase over the previous two years. In 1996, survey results indicated that 52% attended; in 1995, the first year of the program, the figure was only 25%. Despite the higher attendance rates overall, there were some striking inconsistencies among the district rates as School Districts 2, 13, and 14 reported that fewer than 50% of their mentors had attended the Workshop.

The purpose of the Mentor Training Workshop is to acquaint new mentors with the expectations of the BTIP and to provide them with some basic skills and resources to do the job. When she was asked to comment on the usefulness of the workshop, a mentor in District 12 provided this overview on the content:

> [The workshop] helps to clarify goals of the whole program, get to know what resources are available, get to know who is involved in this program within my district, helps to focus on the importance and value of this program from the experiences, comments of people involved in past mentoring situations.

Ninety-nine percent of the mentors who responded to the survey commented positively on the Workshop. A District 2 mentor wrote, "It explained the process well, so I was able to get a handle on what my role was before I began". Another, in District 4, commented, "It was a very informative session. I liked the small skits that were done relating to real school situations. A presentation by a mentor and the beginning teacher was very informative also". A mentor from District 6 revealed a slightly different perspective because she had attended a previous Workshop. "I had already served as a mentor the previous year, but found the session informative and relaxing. There were lots of good ideas, and I particularly enjoyed hearing from the team of mentor/mentee of the previous year."

While several mentors felt that it would have been beneficial to include beginning teachers in this workshop, one expressed the opposite viewpoint: "Excellent [workshop] -- happy to be there sans beginning teacher, as it gave me some ideas and made me more comfortable with [the] concept. Reminded me that I have/had lots to share."

As in previous reports, several mentors commented on the problems created by late hiring practices in some districts. This meant that some mentors had not been appointed in time for the Workshop. For others who received the training but were not given a partner until much later, there was also frustration. Still others lamented the fact that the date of the Workshop precluded assistance during the crucial first days of school. While most of the comments reflected organizational arrangements at the district level, one participant who focussed on the provincial organization, suggested that the information could have been provided in a less costly manner than by holding one large workshop in a central location. This idea has already been acted on. In April, the Steering Committee decided that because of anticipated numbers, mentor training workshops held in the Fall of 1998 will be decentralized to the five provincial anglophone superintendencies.

Professional Development at the District Level

The data indicate that, following the provincial Mentor Training Workshop, all of the district coordinators held fall orientation meetings for both beginning teachers and mentors. Furthermore, near the end of the school year, closing activities for BTIP participants were organized in eleven of the twelve districts. Coordinators in eight of the districts also organized additional activities such as mid-point evaluations, inservice sessions, or opportunities for participants to meet and share ideas. Compared to the previous year, the level of professional activity organized by the coordinators appeared to be more comprehensive and consistently available across the province.

Mentors and beginning teachers were asked to list all the forms of inservice in which they took part to accomplish the goals of the BTIP. Consequently the list is a long one and includes activities organized both at the district and school levels. In addition, they were asked to rate the usefulness of each activity using this rating scale: "very useful", "satisfactory", or "useless". Collectively they rated over one thousand activities. The level of satisfaction with these activities was very high with 98.5% rating their activities as either "very useful" or "satisfactory". Since there was no consistent pattern in the few "useless" ratings, it is safe to conclude these were idiosyncratic. Overall, mentors and beginning teachers appreciated the quality of both the professional activities planned for them at the district level and those they organized themselves within their own schools.

Professional Development at the Local School Level

The focus of BTIP professional activity at both the provincial and district level is intended to provide each set of partners with ideas and skills so that interactions between them will be especially helpful and meaningful to the new staff member and professionally satisfying to both. It was evident from the data that most of the professional activity, as intended, occurred at the local school level and involved the beginning teacher and his or her mentor. The guidelines for appropriate professional activities provided to the mentors by the Steering Committee (see p.3) were closely followed in 1997-98. This marks a distinct improvement from previous reports.

In addition to the open-ended question described above, all beginning teachers were asked to indicate the approximate frequency with which they participated in specific activities associated with teacher induction programs. The list of activities was generated from data received from previous studies by the author and from a review of the literature on teacher induction programs and mentoring. The frequency pattern provides a more comprehensive picture of the scope and concentration of professional activities pursued by the mentor-beginning teacher partners.

Analysis of similar data in 1997 led to a decision to divide the activities into two categories. Category one consists of seven activities which represent a lower risk to teachers, both from an emotional and professional perspective. They require little specific training and

teachers generally feel comfortable participating in these activities. They can generally be characterized as informal contacts and discussions of day-to-day educational concerns. Table 3 lists the activities and compares the rates of participation to the two previous years.

Table 3

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates for specific low-risk professional activities during the 1996, 1997, and 1998 BTIP

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 ****p < 0.01**
1. Make informal contacts with mentor at school	**1998**	1.2	10.5	8.1	80.2	
	1997	1.6	3.2	4.8	90.6	
	1996	4.6	12.3	12.3	70.4	
2. Discuss teaching ideas or strategies	**1998**	2.3	20.3	23.8	53.5	
	1997	0	11.7	20	68.3	
	1996	3.1	27.5	23	45.9	
3. Share or research teaching materials, books, etc	**1998**	10.5	32.5	19.8	37.2	
	1997	1.6	20.6	33.3	44.4	*
	1996	10.7	33.7	16.8	38.2	
4. Discuss curriculum or lesson planning	**1998**	7.6	33.3	22.8	36.2	
	1997	3.2	19.4	22.6	54.8	*
	1996	10.7	33.7	19.9	35.2	
5. Discuss student assessment or reporting	**1998**	10.5	37.2	22.7	29.6	
	1997	1.6	27.4	25.8	45.2	*
	1996	12.7	30.2	23.8	33.3	
6. Discuss classroom management techniques	**1998**	7.6	31	28.7	32.7	
	1997	0	20.6	27	52.4	*
	1996	6.3	36.5	27	30.2	
7. Discuss administrative policies or procedures	**1998**	9.3	39.5	26.2	25.0	
	1997	1.6	30.6	22.6	45.2	*
	1996	6.2	40.6	21.9	23.4	

Since these are relatively low-risk activities, one would expect high rates of participation and hence very low rates of non-involvement. If this is the case, the percentages appearing in the first frequency column, will approach zero. While this is true for items one and two, the figures indicate that frequency rates in 1998 have returned to the higher levels recorded in 1996. This indicates that there were more examples of partners who did not participate in such basic

activities as sharing resources and discussing such topics as classroom assessment, classroom management, and administrative policies. The reason for the return to the 1996 pattern is not evident. We can speculate that the larger numbers of participants and increased problems obtaining and matching mentors with profiles similar to their partners may account for this apparent setback. These problems and related issues will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

The activities listed in Table 4 place higher emotional and professional demands on the participants and may be termed higher-risk activities. Generally, they involve observing either a colleague or a mentor teach or being observed by one's mentor and subsequently receiving feedback (conferencing).

Table 4

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates in specific high-risk professional activities during the 1996, 1997, and 1998 BTIP

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 ****p < 0.01**
1. Meet mentor in scheduled (formal) setting	**1998**	17	52.3	17.6	13.1	
	1997	14.5	51.6	12.9	21	
	1996	15.3	71.9	4.6	7.6	
2. Receive feedback about my teaching from mentor	**1998**	26.2	44.2	13.9	15.7	
	1997	27.4	38.7	16.1	17.7	
	1996	27	50.8	15.9	6.3	
3. Mentor observes me teach	**1998**	41.5	45	8.2	5.3	
	1997	46.8	35.5	8.1	9.7	
	1996	46	46	7.9	3.2	
4. Observe other colleagues teaching (not mentor)	**1998**	28.4	58.6	8.3	4.7	
	1997	22.6	62.9	8.1	6.4	
	1996	50	39.1	0	10.9	
5. Observe my mentor teaching in his/her own class	**1998**	43.8	42.6	7.7	5.9	
	1997	41.9	35.5	12.9	9.7	
	1996	51.6	40.3	0	8.1	

An analysis of Table 4 reveals that although there were no statistically significant changes from 1997 to 1998, some minor behaviour patterns are worth noting. This year more mentors observed their partners teaching than in the previous two years. Despite this improvement, approximately 42% of beginning teachers still were not observed by their mentors. A minor improvement can also be noted in the number of times beginning teachers

received feedback from their mentors. On the negative side, Table 4 indicates that, compared to the previous year, slightly fewer pairs met on a scheduled basis, and fewer beginning teachers had opportunities to observe either other colleagues or their mentors teaching (although rates have not returned to 1996 levels). A pattern noted in the 1997 study is still evident -- beginning teachers have more opportunity to observe colleagues than their own mentors.

All of the activities listed in Tables 3 and 4 were recommended to mentors at the provincial Mentor Training Workshop as being appropriate for the induction program. While encouraging mentors to progress from Table 3 activities to Table 4 when they felt comfortable, workshop presenters acknowledged that the timetable for such activities must be set by the participants.

Beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the activities, listed in both Tables 3 and 4, they wished had happened more often. Every one of the top four activities selected by the new teachers appears on the list of high-risk activities in Table 4: observe mentor teaching (30%), observe other colleagues teaching (25%), mentor observes me teach (22%), and receive feedback about my teaching from mentor (16%). In 1997, beginning teachers made similar selections, but the percentages in the four categories were 22, 18, 22, and 16 percent respectively. While these selections do not lessen the importance of the low-risk activities in Table 3, it clearly indicates that new teachers feel they would benefit professionally from increased exposure to these activities.

The beginning teacher survey also measured the frequency of two other activities: opportunities to meet other beginning teachers, and social meetings with mentors out of school. The results suggest that approximately 77% of the new teachers had at least one opportunity to meet their peers, while 9% met more than 10 times. Participants gave a relatively high value to this activity because 15% wished it had happened more often. Approximately 71% (compared to 81% in 1997) of the beginning teachers reported meeting their mentor socially out of school; 9% met more than 10 times; 11% percent wished it had happened more often. While it may not be possible to draw any particular conclusions from these figures, they do provide some evidence that social connections play an important role for many partners in this induction program.

Problems Identified by Beginning Teachers and Mentors

The problems encountered at the local level by beginning teachers and mentors in the BTIP or other induction programs are reasonably well known. To some extent, the purpose of this item in the survey was to determine whether progress is being made in addressing these obstacles. Beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the conditions listed in Table 5 caused problems for them during the term of the program. By comparing the percentages of teachers who indicated they experienced specific difficulties in 1997 and 1998, it is possible to see whether overall progress is being made and which particular conditions need to be addressed.

Finding enough time to carry out the recommended activities, in addition to regular teaching duties, remains the outstanding hurdle for induction participants. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents indicated this condition caused problems; approximately one-third of them said time posed a significant problem. The New Brunswick findings are consistent with the literature in other jurisdictions (Ganser, 1996; Huffman & Leak, 1986). It is interesting to note that the figure for 1998 is 8% higher than in 1997. The questionnaire did not identify why this was the case and I can only speculate that restructuring in the provincial education system may have contributed to a feeling informally expressed by many teachers that this year there were unusually high demands on available time.

Table 5

A percentage comparison of conditions causing problems for beginning teachers during the 1997 and 1998 induction programs

conditions causing problems	1997	1998
lack of time	60%	67.8%
different teaching assignment to mentor	22	30.4
difficulty accessing BTIP funds	22	29.3
unclear expectations for BTIP	19	17.2
location of classroom relative to mentors	15	15.5
other	15	12.1
personal incompatibility with mentor	0	1.7

Table 5 also reveals that 30% of beginning teachers felt that being paired with a mentor whose work assignment different than theirs created difficulties in their professional relationship. (In several cases, mentors and partners were located in different schools). The increase from 22 % in 1997 is quite significant. The overall increase in the number of partners in the 1998 BTIP may have contributed to this situation. Other comments from the data suggest that finding appropriate matches for new teachers was particularly acute at the high school level. Regardless, this appears to be a regressive development which should be avoidable in most cases, if appropriate consideration is given to identifiable factors when partnerships are being arranged.

Prior to the 1998 BTIP, the Steering Committee circulated to all anglophone schools in the province, a brochure called "A Partnership that Builds Success: Beginning Teacher Induction Program" . In addition to providing a brief description of the program, it contained a section called "considerations for mentor selection". The brochure highlighted the importance of selecting mentors whose classrooms are in geographical proximity and who have similar teaching assignments. While the first consideration shows neither improvement nor regression in Table 5, the second certainly does. This may imply that this information has not been disseminated properly or that there is a shortage of mentors with the correct profiles. We can safely conclude that different assignments caused problems for 30% of respondents; 25% of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

them indicated it was a significant problem. Larger numbers of mis-matched mentors and beginning teachers may partially explain the small increase in personal incompatibility over 1997.

Difficulty accessing BTIP funds caused the third greatest source of problems for BTIP partners. Furthermore, the percentages increased from 22 to 29% over the previous year. The written comments make it clear that this refers to NBTA funding, as the amount and procedures for obtaining Department funding have remained consistent. The dilemma over NBTA funds is created by the unique method by which these funds are allocated. Since the inception of the BTIP, the NBTA Board of Directors has waited until its Fall meeting to vote on this allocation. Until that occurs, there is no guarantee either on the commitment of funds or the amount. In addition, the Board has required individual pairs of teachers to apply directly to the NBTA professional development officer for funding. This adds a layer of bureaucratic red tape to teachers who are already being stretched to their limit. In addition, both teachers and coordinators find the dual funding system (Department of Education & NBTA) confusing. This year, the NBTA Board of Directors lowered the amount per pair, presumably because there were more pairs participating and the total fund from which grants are drawn remained unchanged. Many teachers who would not have understood the process, commented negatively on what appeared to them as a reduced commitment by their professional organization. In fact, negative feedback during the course of the program caused the Steering Committee to establish a committee to address this particular issue and recommend changes prior to the 1999 BTIP.

One bright spot in Table 5 is the reduced number of respondents who indicated that the expectations for the BTIP were unclear. While the 17% figure is not insignificant, evidently the brochure and inservice sessions are helping. Higher percentages in some districts seemed to indicate that beginning teachers were late entering the Program. The onus is on district coordinators to provide adequate information to these teachers.

The category of "Other" problems deserves comment. Twelve percent of respondents encountered other difficulties not listed in the table. These tend to be idiosyncratic and defy categorization. Nevertheless, they are important and worth reporting. In some places, lack of supply teachers for French immersion or French second language teachers, created hardships. Teachers on the island of Grand Manan could not always attend meetings held on the mainland and it was equally difficult for the coordinator to honour her commitments on the island. Teachers reported that some principals were not well informed about the BTIP and consequently were not supportive. One beginning teacher found that not having her own classroom created special problems for her and her mentor.

Mentors identified similar problems to their partners. Lack of time posed the greatest hurdle. Confusion over funding, poor grade level or subject matches, and the inconvenient placement of partners' classrooms were rated about equal in order of significance. A few mentors felt they lacked sufficient skill or knowledge to be effective mentors; partner incompatibility created difficulties for four mentors. The largest group (38%) indicated that there was nothing they disliked about the BTIP.

Perceptions of Roles and Feelings of Support

Principals. Because the 1997 BTIP Report recommended that efforts should be made to better inform and involve school administrators in the program, the 1998 principals' survey asked them to describe their personal involvement. The pattern that emerged from seventy-four responses suggests that principals' involvement generally fell into one of four categories: no involvement, minimal involvement, active involvement, and extensive involvement. Thirty percent fell into the first category which meant that while they knew about the program, they generally lacked detailed information and were not directly involved. Thirty-three percent of principals reported minimal involvement. They were aware of the program; they tried to be supportive, but their actual involvement consisted of peripheral contacts like passing on memos, making suggestions, or asking occasional questions about the program. The third level of involvement includes the characteristics described in category two but adds the active components of selecting mentors and/or arranging supply teachers for the partners. Thirty percent of principals qualified for this category. Finally, there was a small group of six principals (8%) who became very involved with the BTIP. Two of them acted as mentors. A principal in District 12 reported having "talked and met with teams during planning; monitored team meetings from time to time; helped to free mentors for brief meetings with their partners". Another described "regular feedback between myself and mentor to delineate mentor role and supervision of instruction role of principal -- few problems in this area." Although the categories of principal involvement are somewhat arbitrary, it is evident that they cover a continuum and that a significant proportion of administrators were not meaningfully involved with the Program. I suspect that the Steering Committee would like to see all principals at least in category two and, ideally, in category three.

Principals were asked if they had received clear, comprehensive, and timely information regarding the BTIP during the 1997-98 school year. Seventy-four percent replied "yes" and 26% said "no". In the latter category, principals in Districts 2 and 8 accounted for 62% of the negative replies. This is a disproportionate response since only 31% of the principals' responses came from these two large districts. It appears that principals in District 2 received late and inconsistent information concerning the BTIP. This was no doubt largely due to the late appointment of a new coordinator after the Mentor Training Workshop in September. A District 2 principal wrote, "I received a fax informing me to have a teacher available to go to Fredericton to participate in this program. I have received nothing else!" Other comments included "too little, too late" or "short notice". Not everyone responded negatively. One District 2 principal observed that "the information was well presented. It just arrived the same time as many other important pieces of info". Previous reports have noted difficulties determining the actual involvement of District 2 teachers in the provincial BTIP (no surveys were returned in 1997). While it is evident from the data that this district was playing catch-up this year, it is encouraging to see that this large district now seems committed to the Program.

After District 2, School District 8 had the second largest number of participants (30) in the BTIP. The difficulty of providing clear communication to both teachers and principals is evident in this quotation from a District 8 principal: "With the overflow of information this year, the info re BTIP tended to be 'lost in the shuffle'. Updates should be part of the Principals' Meetings to ensure it continues to receive priority."

District Coordinators. When the Steering Committee requested that BTIP coordinators be appointed in each of the 12 anglophone school districts, school superintendents and directors responded by asking district supervisors to accept this as part of their job descriptions. Survey returns from the coordinators revealed that only two have held this position for the full three years of the program. Four coordinators were in their second year, and six were acting for the first time. Eleven of the twelve felt that they were the logical person for the appointment. However, one of the six newly appointed coordinators indicated that others with more supervisory experience would have been more logical choices. Also, as we noted above, one coordinator did not assume responsibilities until after the 1998 program was well underway.

The coordinators were asked whether they felt they had received adequate support from the Department of Education, the NB Teachers' Association, their district office, and the school principals in their own district. Table 6 displays the results of this question.

Table 6

District coordinators perceptions of support from different BTIP stakeholders
N=12

	level of perceived support			
stakeholders	**adequate**	**marginal**	**inadequate**	**not applicable**
Dept of Education	11		1	
NBTA	8		4	
District offices	8	1	1	2
School principals	6	2	2	2

While the majority of coordinators felt that the various stakeholders were providing adequate support, there was not a consensus. Table 6 indicates four coordinators felt that support from the NBTA was inadequate, while that of the Department of Education was the strongest and most consistent. What the table does not show is that all but one of the coordinators who felt marginally or inadequately supported were performing their duties for the first time. This suggests that some of the perceived gaps in support were at least aggravated by a lack of previous experience. Perhaps a timely workshop for both new and experienced BTIP coordinators would help all coordinators feel better about the support available to them.

While some coordinators felt support from all stakeholders was generally adequate, an examination of some of the negative comments may help those stakeholders seeking to improve their level of support. The most vehement comments were directed at the confusion caused by the funding arrangements:

"Finances -- trying to juggle a budget which is not all assigned".

"$ only -- what a nightmare."

"Breaking the funding down and tracking by teams is time consuming. The break between the financial year and school year causes much extra work."

"Let's get this money business straight before it ruins what ground we have covered."

Two coordinators lamented that the reduction in NBTA funding had angered teachers who did not understand it and put both them and the BTIP in a negative light.

Several coordinators alluded to the marginalised role which many principals play in the BTIP. One said,"Principals are very busy. Some are much more supportive than others. More public relations/communications/inservice with this group is needed". Another admitted by-passing principals: "To be frank, I didn't expect a lot of principals. They expect us to take charge of this. They are helpful, of course, but this is one of those things where we can give the 'extras' and they are grateful". A third noted that "principals sought new direction when their role in this did not change appreciably. They seemed to avoid beginning teachers, not embrace them. Some [made] negative comments on BT's being absent for [professional development]". While none of these remarks should be taken as representative of the coordinators generally, they provide more evidence of the need to more clearly define the role of principals in the BTIP.

Use of Recommended Resources. The Steering Committee recommends a variety of induction resources for use by BTIP participants -- primarily mentors and beginning teachers. In particular the Committee has made efforts to make three resources readily available. Mentors who attend the provincial Mentor Training Workshop are given a copy of a booklet printed by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Building for Success: Assisting Beginning Teachers . It contains many practical suggestions for mentors and others involved with teacher induction. I believe that sufficient copies are also provided to coordinators for those mentors who did not attend the Workshop.

A second recommended resource is The Skillful Teacher (Saphier & Gower, 1987). This is a text filled with practical teaching strategies for both experienced and beginning teachers. Copies of this resource may be obtained through the provincial textbook supply agency, Instructional Resources. It was suggested that partners could use some of their BTIP funds to order this book. The Steering Committee believed this book would be useful to focus some of the discussions between mentors and their partners.

A video series, "Mentoring the New Teacher" (ASCD, 1994) is another resource recommended for use by the mentors either as a professional support or to spark discussions between partners. This set has been purchased by the Department of Education and may be borrowed from Instructional Resources.

Surveys in 1997 and 1998 have attempted to measure the extent to which these resources are being used and to rate their value. Table 7 indicates mentors' responses to this inquiry.

Table 7
Percentage use by mentors and ratings of three recommended induction resources during the 1997 and 1998 BTIP

Resource	Year	% use	Rating of usefulness		
			weak	worthwhile	very useful
The Skillful Teacher	1998	56%	7%	69%	24%
	1997	65	0	62	38
Building for Success	1998	49	11	71	18
	1997	46	15	55	30
Mentoring the New	1998	16	17	37	46
Teacher (series)	1997	17	20	40	30

The data are reasonably consistent over the two year period. They indicate that significant numbers of mentors are not making use of any of these resources. The Skillful Teacher is the most frequently used resource, with 56% of mentors using it in 1998. Slightly fewer than half the mentors reported using Building for Success, while only one mentor in six made use of the video series.

The ratings of the usefulness of these three resources provided by those who used them are mixed, but reasonably consistent. Evidently the majority of users found all three either worthwhile or very useful. The Skillful Teacher appears to have the highest rating.

Perceived Benefits of the BTIP to Participants

One of the general goals of induction programs is to increase the retention rate of promising beginning teachers (Huling-Austin, 1986). It is well known that relatively high percentages (30 - 50%) of beginning teachers leave the profession in the first five years. A major assumption of induction programs is that when new teachers are adequately supported in their initial year, fewer will leave teaching, and those who stay will be more competent to replace teachers who are retiring. Hence, the quality of a teaching force is maintained. This was part of the motivation for initially establishing the BTIP in New Brunswick.

This researcher has not attempted to track the long-term retention rates of beginning teachers in New Brunswick. Many considerations enter into whether a designated beginning teacher in the BTIP is rehired. However, the 1998 district coordinators' survey sought to determine approximately how many will be retained in 1999. The coordinators' survey data indicate that about 85% of beginning teachers were being rehired. This includes nearly all of the French Immersion and French Second Language teachers. The coordinators' comments suggested that lower numbers of students in the Kindergarten program and teachers returning from various leaves accounted for many of those who were not rehired.

A second indicator of the value of the BTIP can be determined by the extent to which participants recommend its continuation. Mentors, principals, and district coordinators were asked to respond simply "yes" or "no" as to whether they recommended the continuation of the program. Beginning teachers, on the other hand, were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with the statement, "I recommend that the BTIP be continued". If they agreed or strongly agreed, then this was interpreted as a "Yes". Table 8 compares the percentage responses to this question over the past three years.

Table 8

A three-year comparison of recommendations for continuation of the BTIP by beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators.

	1998		1997		1996	
Group Respondents	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Beginning teachers	165	94.5	63	100	60	98.3
Mentors	153	96.1	55	100	61	91.8
Principals	80	98.8	43	100	52	90
District Coordinators	12	100	11	100	12	100

N= number of replies to this particular question

Overall, Table 8 indicates that all four participating groups place a very high value on the Beginning Teacher Induction Program. Despite criticisms, the benefits far outweigh the deficits.

Beginning Teachers. In 1998, a total of 81.6% of the beginning teachers indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher." This marked a dramatic and significant drop from 96% in 1997. In terms of individual numbers of teachers in the 1998 program, this figure suggests that approximately 30 teachers felt that they had not gained from the experience. That is an unacceptably high number which should stand as a warning signal to program planners. The disgruntled teachers are spread over seven of the twelve districts. The highest percentage of unsatisfied teachers (40%) taught in one district, but this is understandable, given its lack of commitment to the program in previous years and the late appointment of a coordinator. Several quotations referred to the growing pains being experienced this year in this district. This one is representative of the others:

> There were growing pains which every new program experiences, but these do not warrant dissolving the program. I feel the program can improve if some changes are made. Obviously a lack of a clear budget caused many problems. Some people were left without any access to money. I believe that a person acting as a mentor needs to have clearly defined guidelines that describe their role.

The extent to which beginning teachers felt the BTIP benefited them ranged from 100% in four districts to only 50% in a single district. In the latter, one of the disenchanted beginning teachers wrote:

> The program should be clearer. The expectations were not realistic. We had little to no money to use and when we wanted to use it we ran into obstacles. The meetings were outside of school time too often. I coached this year and this either conflicted with the BTIP or overloaded an already busy schedule. This program, as it is, is of no benefit to me.

A beginning teacher from another district, brought a completely different but equally valid perspective to explain why the BTIP had failed to provide suitable support to her:

> As a mature (in years) first contract teacher (guidance counsellor) I felt that the BTIP program was a difficult thing to follow through on. Because I was between four buildings, I chose mentors where I went. It was tough to make contact with my mentor. Also as a guidance counsellor, I had regular contact (meetings) with other guidance and [methods and resource] people. I also had people I relied on for support and information from these sources.

The next quotation, from yet another district where there were several dissatisfied beginning teachers, is a reminder of the importance of careful mentor selection.

> I was able to find a mentor in a couple of teachers other than my mentor. Since I teach math and she teaches French, we had difficulty connecting. Also, I found that my mentor was more concerned with how she could spend the BTIP money on meeting other French teachers rather than on my improvement. We also found second semester very busy and have not met this semester at all.

Another beginning teacher in a rather isolated part of a geographically large district described the situation which led to the failure of her partnership to flourish.

> In our situation, there was no leader or anyone to head this. I really feel it is a worthwhile program. It is just unfortunate that we did not get off to a better start.... There was definitely a breakdown in communication/information somewhere along the line. Our principal did not meet with us specifically about this, but maybe he assumed we were handling this on our own and maybe we should have been (?)

The increased discontent in the BTIP among beginning teachers is a serious concern and the representative sample of quotations suggests that for a variety of reasons, some districts were less successful than others in implementing the recommended elements of the BTIP. The growth of the program in 1998, the many responsibilities expected of supervisors (BTIP coordination is not their only responsibility), reduced funding, school restructuring, new coordinator appointments -- these reasons, and no doubt many others, may help explain why significantly fewer beginning teachers found the program beneficial. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the fact that 81% of beginning teachers did benefit and are very enthusiastic about this program. The following comments represent the feelings of this group of teachers. Several themes are evident; a prominent one is the very significant roles played by mentors in the lives of beginning teachers.

> This has been the most positive experience in my professional career and education. My mentor quickly became a strong role model for me in many aspects of life. Career choices, teaching strategies, motivation, health, as well as financial issues were discussed many times between mentor-mentee, which will benefit me for the rest of my career.
>
> - District 15 Beginning Teacher

> I really loved this program! I was fortunate to have a really terrific mentor who helped me a great deal! It was nice to have someone I could turn to that could answer my questions and provide support. My only suggestion is regarding the resources funding. Next year it should be made more clear how much money is available.
>
> - District 2 Beginning Teacher

In addition to the role played by mentors, beginning teachers mentioned other benefits such as observing other colleagues teach and purchasing professional materials.

> My experience has been a very positive one. I particularly enjoyed the openness of colleagues who warmly welcomed me into their classrooms. I feel that I have learned a great deal about myself and the profession, not only from my mentor, but from others.
>
> - District 18 Beginning Teacher

> It was a great first year experience and I enjoyed myself. Also, I greatly appreciated having the opportunity and the money to go visit other classrooms and observe the teachers. This being my first year of teaching, I have a lot to learn and this program has helped me accomplish some of my goals.
>
> - District 14 Beginning Teacher

Despite having extensive previous teaching experience, the reaction of this new-to-the-district teacher to her BTIP involvement clearly points to its professional value to all teachers:

> It was an excellent program -- even with 7 years teaching experience, I learned a tremendous amount and had a much more effective/enjoyable year due to my mentor's

> support. [I] greatly appreciated the flexibility to develop a program that best suited our needs. [It] should be available for any teacher new to a school.
>
> - District 2 Beginning Teacher

The following quotation attests to the valuable expertise which all experienced teachers can share with new teachers. It also serves as a reminder that many considerations should enter into mentor selection. Obviously prior experience with the culture and policies of a new school is an asset.

> This program is excellent for beginning teachers. It would have been more appropriate for me if my mentor had already taught at this school. (It was her first year/time at this school.) But she was very helpful with suggestions in my classroom management and curriculum planning.
>
> - District 6 Beginning Teacher

Although the next teacher's comments give the Program a strong endorsement, they also point to another breakdown in the mentor selection process. Several mentioned this problem.

> This has been an extraordinary experience. I've never felt alone; however, it would have been better if my mentor would've been in the same school. I shared a lot with her, but I feel I could've received more if she was with me in school.
>
> - District 8 Beginning Teacher

It is interesting to compare the previous two quotations with this one in which a beginning teacher describes what for her was an ideal mentoring situation.

> My situation was very ideal. My mentor was <u>across the hall</u> from me. Even though we may not have done all of the 'formal' meetings, planning sessions, etc. that we had wanted, the casual chats we had were <u>very helpful</u>. It is nice, as a first year teacher, to have a specific person who will answer any questions you have.
>
> - District 18 Beginning Teacher

This beginning teacher has evidently moved from a long-term supply position the previous year, to a full-time contract this year. Her remarks are a reminder that other supply teachers in similar situations are being denied access to the BTIP because they do not qualify for funding. Perhaps sympathetic principals will consider finding informal mentors (outside the BTIP) for long-term supply teachers who are in their first year of teaching.

> I would have loved to have a mentor last year. It would have made me less stressed! Even though I wasn't on contract, they knew I would have been there all last year.
>
> - District 13 Beginning Teacher

A common theme among beginning teachers is the importance they place on having a designated colleague to whom they can turn for advice, encouragement, support, and friendship during that stressful first year in a classroom.

> This has been a fantastic year for me as a beginning teacher. Having a mentor that I was able to talk to, about problems both in and out of school, was one of the main things that kept me sane. I don't know what I would have done without him. He made my first year, a wonderful, unforgettable experience. I would recommend this program to every beginning teacher.
>
> -District 12 Beginning Teacher

> This has been a great year. I found my mentor to be very helpful. She supported and encouraged me throughout the year. We not only became colleagues this year, we became very good friends.
>
> - District 8 Beginning Teacher

> This year, coupled with the mentorship experience, resulted in a ground for growth, enrichment, and support. I learned a very important lesson. Sometimes negativity is solely due to one's insecurity or inexperience. Due to the professionalism of my mentor, I learned to channel, and/or wait out the storm. Soon I realized the calm that comes after every storm was on the horizon.
>
> - District 18 Beginning Teacher

Mentors. A number of measures provide evidence of the high positive value that mentors generally placed on the BTIP. In Table 8, figures indicate that 96.8% of mentors recommended its continuation. Earlier, we learned that 98.9% of the mentors rated the professional activities conducted at the local or district levels as useful; 38% indicated that there wasn't anything they disliked about the Program.

The mentor survey asked if there had been any positive aspects of being a mentor teacher. Several themes, which are common in the literature and in previous reports in this province, emerged from the data. The most frequently repeated response was that mentoring encouraged experienced teachers to reflect and to re-evaluate their own teaching methods and strategies. A mentor from District 8 expressed this idea in these words:

> Teaching for a number of years, some things start to be taken for granted. Having 'new blood' question the whys of some of my practices enabled me to really rethink some of my own practices. [It was] refreshing to talk to a colleague concerning students and policies that were of concern to both of us.

Mentors often recalled their initiation to teaching experiences and wished they had had the benefit of a program like the BTIP. They viewed this program as an opportunity to be helpful and supportive to someone just beginning their professional career. Helping others felt

good! Many mentors agreed with the sentiment of a mentor in District 2 who said, " Being in a position to help someone and occasionally assist them in solving problems or accomplishing goals is highly rewarding". A mentor in District 4 wrote that "new people need support and encouragement. To be part of this program was a privilege and I wish it had been here for me when I began." For other mentors, the importance of this help proved an eye-opener: " I really enjoy helping people. I didn't realize how important it is to help a new teacher."

Another common theme expressed by the mentors was that the sharing relationship with their partners had been mutually beneficial -- although mentors had experience to share, they also learned new teaching ideas and strategies from their (mostly) younger partners. Closely related to this theme was the notion that being able to share expertise boosted the self-esteem of the experienced teachers for whom there are few career ladders. The following quotations capture some of this sentiment:

> I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities of visiting our teacher's classes -- this is so worthwhile!! I have learned something from every visit. It is so motivating and refreshing to see what others are doing. Thanks for this!
>
> - District 6 Mentor

> We met after school on an informal basis. We shared and developed a relationship that helped both of us. I was able to share a lot of material with my mentee; I was also able to receive from his enthusiasm and dedication.
>
> - District 8 Mentor

Finally, many mentors expressed satisfaction at having an opportunity to experience an alternative to the isolation of many workplaces. The formal partnerships with new colleagues had unexpectedly resulted in the development of professionally enhancing collegial relationships and personal friendships. A District 10 mentor wrote, "I have enjoyed watching the beginning teacher's anxiety level diminish and confidence level increase. It has been pleasurable to build a solid and trusting friendship." A mentor in District 17 took advantage of a unique situation to build collegial links and grow professionally: "I have learned a lot from my partner. Since there were two new teachers, we had the chance to meet as a group of four. The opportunity has helped me to become a better teacher. "

The 1998 survey revealed that 91.6% of the mentors would be willing to act in this capacity again. This represents a small drop from 93% the previous year. An interesting development in this year's survey was the observation that more mentors than ever before put conditions on their re-offering. The three most commonly heard conditions were "if we get what we are promised in funding", "if I can start at the beginning of the year", and "if my partner is in the same school (or grade level)". Perhaps if these conditions (which are very reasonable for any induction program) could be assured, an even higher percentage of mentors would respond with the enthusiasm of this one in District 4:

> I found [mentoring] a great experience. I not only developed a relationship with a new friend. I had someone there who shared her ideas and enthusiasm with me. Put my name back in the hat; I'd love to do it again.

Principals. Data from their survey confirmed that principals were extremely supportive of the BTIP. All but one recommended continuation of the Program and even that individual seemed to approve of the concept. Instead he questioned the cost of the provincial organization and suggested that it should be organized either by school administrators or the district office. Principals valued the BTIP for a variety of reasons. A principal in District 13 said that "this program takes a great deal of pressure off administration in dealing with new staff". Several of his colleagues echoed similar sentiments. A new principal who appreciated the support, suggested this concept should also be tried with new principals:

> As a new principal (and maybe the more experienced ones too), I am not always sure what to do when it comes to supporting a struggling new teacher. It is important for everyone to work together. New principals need support as well when it comes to matters like these.

Several principals acknowledged their limited time to commit to the BTIP; consequently, they appreciated the fact that others were showing leadership. A District 10 principal wrote, "I much appreciated the limited amount of admin time involved -- if it called for a lot of time administratively I feel I would not be able to give it the attention it deserves. Credit for the program goes to the district office." A colleague commented along a similar vein: "At a time when so much is being downloaded on school administrators, I am pleased that this extremely important job is not being ignored. If we had to do it, I'm afraid it wouldn't get done!"

While acknowledging that the BTIP relieved them of some responsibilities, the principals were also generous in describing the benefits they saw in it for their beginning teacher and mentors. A District 17 principal called it "a good program -- working better every year." Many principals indicated that the partnership and release time arrangement were working well and were particularly beneficial because they encouraged teachers to observe one another teaching and to discuss the craft of teaching. A District 13 principal reminded us that "time is the most valuable commodity in schools" and that this program "allowed teachers to touch base with each other". A principal in District 17 also applauded "time for new teachers and mentors to get together to talk, review materials, and be involved in some PD. Excellent record keeping of what was done this year". Ironically, several of the teachers in this district strongly criticized the record keeping requirement which this principal appreciated. They saw it as an encroachment into their valuable time. Apparently value is perspective specific.

Despite many plaudits about the BTIP, principals had criticisms and suggestions for improvement. Two themes dominated the principals' agenda: communication and funding. Administrators in the majority of districts called for better communication about BTIP activities. A District 2 principal called for "an information package early in the year". Another, in District

18, stated, "As a principal, I would welcome information on what happens at the meetings the mentor and new teacher attend. This would just keep me informed as to what the principal could do to support the direction of the Mentorship Program". A colleague in another district felt that improved communication will improve with continuity of leadership: "Coordination of the program at the district level will likely get better with time and practice. Presently it appears somewhat difficult because the [supervisors] are changing." Other principals suggested including them in BTIP inservice sessions or holding preliminary meetings to advise them how they can help.

Many principals agreed with the principal in District 18 who observed that "the money business seemed to cause confusion this year". In addition, principals had specific complaints about the funding arrangements. A District 12 principal was unhappy about the timing of the budgetary process in education: "From the school level it is difficult to plan beyond March 31 with any certainty that money is there for supply costs." In District 6 where many French teachers were employed, a principal encouraged that ways be found to obtain funding for the AEFNB teachers who participate.

Several comments implied that principals' support should not be taken for granted. One principal who obviously has reservations about the effect of the program on students wrote, "I'm not sure teachers being away from their classes were worth the time missed with their students". This is a legitimate concern which needs to be addressed if the support of administrators is to be assured. In addition to receiving timely information, principals need opportunities to share their concerns and to receive assurances that the best interests of both students and teachers are being met.

District Coordinators. Because the coordinators work closely with both the mentors and beginning teachers, they saw first hand the benefits for participants. The coordinator in District 15 indicated that for him the most positive feature of the program was "to familiarize myself with the continuous growth of both the mentor and beginning teacher. It was wonderful to see that everyone involved in this program grew educationally and personally." Being able to make a direct difference in the life of a developing teacher seemed to remind the District 8 coordinator of her days in the classroom: "I loved this project. We, again, as in teaching, are touching the future by means of these caring, intelligent young teachers."

One coordinator who had held the position for less than a year said," I enjoyed the contact I had with the beginning teachers and their mentors. My involvement throughout the past year has increased my awareness of the needs of beginning teachers and the necessity of working much more with principals to communicate [regarding] needs, resources, the BTIP program and so on." These sentiments were echoed by several others who also shared similar learning curves. Second time around will be better for everyone! Experienced coordinators also learned valuable lessons and wrote of the enjoyment of working directly with enthusiastic teachers. The District 14 coordinator wrote:

> I enjoyed forging links with the new teachers and acting as a mentor myself in many ways. I felt very positive about the program although I can see that I must improve my communication with the principals and I see a need for a more intensive beginning to the process.

District coordinators have proven themselves to be key people in the provincial induction program because of their strategic position on the Steering Committee and their relationships with both principals and partner teachers. This also meant that they bore the brunt of complaints from participants. Despite encountering many problems and having many other responsibilities, the district coordinators unanimously endorsed the continuation of the BTIP and wanted to be involved again. Their commitment to this program and their enthusiasm for its continuation auger well for the long-term success of the BTIP!

Reflecting on the Data

Addressing Ongoing Issues

There are two major and two minor issues which emerge from an examination of the data. The two major issues are solving the funding confusion and sustaining the growth of the Program. The first minor issue is how to provide adequate service to part-time and itinerant beginning teachers; the second is how to respond to beginning teachers who belong to the Francophone counterpart of the NBTA, the AEFNB. To some extent, these topics are interconnected. However, I will address each topic separately in an attempt to identify the issues and explore possible solutions.

Funding. Much has already been said about the confusion experienced by beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators this year. This issue has been raised in every report to date, but this year the voices seem to be louder and to contain more frustration. It may be that the larger numbers of people involved exacerbate the situation. Setting that aside, and also setting aside the regular calls for increased funding, there are three specific issues in funding which need to be urgently addressed. The first is the delay in determining the amount of the NBTA commitment to the Program. The second is the requirement for those who request and allocate funds to deal with two bureaucracies -- the Department of Education and the NBTA. The third is the break in the financial year at the end of March which results in splitting funding allocations for the BTIP into 80% and 20%. I suspect that finding solutions to these hurdles will test the goodwill and diplomatic skills of well-meaning professionals in several organizations. Setting up a sub-committee of the Steering Committee is a reasonable first response, but it may not be enough. Solutions to this nagging problem of funding must be found if the goodwill and reputation which have been built up in previous years are to continue. Failure to streamline and simplify the funding arrangements may well prove to be the Achilles' Heel of the BTIP.

Sustaining Program Growth. The BTIP expanded faster than anyone expected in 1998. That growth set off a chain of events which created additional demands on organizers and participants at all levels of the education system. Larger facilities were needed to hold the Mentor training Workshop, additional funds were required, more mentors were recruited after school began, district coordinators' were faced with additional responsibilities, etc.. The strain appears to have resulted in more instances of compromised quality than in 1997, when we had the benefit of one year of experience and lower numbers than the first year. I think there is an expectation that every year the BTIP will improve over the previous year. This year the Program suffered some set-backs in the delivery of services! Perhaps this year's results will cause planners to reflect on whether the BTIP can accommodate unlimited expansion and maintain the level of satisfaction evident after the 1997 survey .

A key question is whether the BTIP can cope with the possibility of continuing growth. Two particular issues seem to emerge from the data. First is the need for supporting the district supervisors in their roles as BTIP coordinators. It is evident that the coordinators really believe in this program and will do their best to make it work. It is also evident that some of them are spread too thin -- they cannot humanly accomplish all the responsibilities expected of them. Not all districts are equal; not every coordinator has large numbers of beginning teachers; not every coordinator has the same skills or previous experience.

Providing support to the coordinators will relieve some of their stress and improve the quality of the BTIP. I suggest that this support can take two forms: educate superintendents and directors of education concerning the importance of the BTIP at this particular time in New Brunswick. Ask them to examine the workload and suitability of those appointed as coordinators so that the latter will have a better chance of being successful. In districts with large numbers of new teachers or geographical challenges, innovative approaches may be required to successfully coordinate the Program. For example, in District 12 several supervisors supported the designated coordinator . A second form of support would be to hold a provincial Coordinators' Workshop prior to the start of the school year. This would permit a review of expectations and procedures as well as an exchange of ideas between the experienced and neophyte coordinators.

The second issue is recruiting and training appropriate mentors in sufficient numbers. There was a shortage of mentors in at least two districts this year. This resulted in some mentors working with two beginning teachers. Finding willing and qualified mentors at the high school level seems to have been particularly difficult. The situation is further exasperated by late hiring practices in many districts. Furthermore, the data implied that there was an increase in the number of mis-matched mentors and beginning teachers. The desirable characteristics of mentors are well known and readily available to the coordinators and principals who normally recruit mentors. I have to assume that program organizers made compromises to fill spots. Among the consequences were increased numbers of frustrated mentors and disgruntled beginning teachers. Can the Program adequately serve unlimited numbers or is it preferable to limit participation to what the infrastructure can support ? This is a dilemma without a simple solution, but possibly the Steering Committee should consider the question and the possible

consequences of various options. Perhaps some creative solutions can be discovered. Hiring or recruiting retired teachers as volunteer mentors is not an ideal situation, but it may be preferable to asking one mentor to work with two mentees.

With the planned move of the Mentor Training Program from a central location to the five superintendencies, a measure of quality control has been relinquished. The potential for erosion in the quality of mentor training is higher because of the different levels of support which are available in different parts of the province. This is not to suggest that de-centralization of mentor training is inappropriate. I think it is necessary at this time. However, I am concerned because of the increased responsibility this places on district coordinators and because I fear the quality of training will suffer. The Steering Committee will need to maintain overall responsibility for coordinating and evaluating the content and quality of mentor training at the superintendency level.

Servicing specialist, itinerant, and part-time teachers. This issue has been raised in previous reports. The problem still exists and will likely continue. The problem arises when Program organizers try to find appropriate mentors either for part-time teachers or teachers who are placed in specialist or itinerant positions such as guidance, music, or French. In the case of the part-time teachers, mentors complain that there are additional difficulties scheduling time together either because the partners are not there every day or they leave in the middle of the day; coordinators complain that while there is only partial funding, the same amount of organizational effort is required for part-time teachers. The problem for specialists and itinerant teachers is to find a mentor who has a similar teaching assignment and teaches in the same school. Except in very large schools, the options are either to have a mentor with a similar assignment in another school or to have a mentor with a different assignment in the same school. Both situations are problematic. With significant numbers of partners in these kinds of less-than-ideal situations, Program organizers need to brainstorm possible solutions. If someone has had success, then we need to share the ideas with others. A section which follows attempts to do just that.

AEFNB participation. A high percentage of the new teachers being hired in the province are either French Core or French Immersion teachers. Although they are teaching in anglophone districts, many of them are francophone and prefer to join L'Association des enseignants francophones du Nouveau Brunswick (AEFNB), which is the francophone counterpart to the NBTA. While this is permissible, it creates problems with regard to funding, since the AEFNB does not make a financial contribution similar to the NBTA. Beginning teachers who are members of the AEFNB are not eligible for funding. Hence they are either omitted from the Program or the funds allocated to the district must be spread among more people than originally intended. Most districts advise new teachers to join the NBTA if they want to participate in the BTIP. A few include everyone and pick up the extra costs locally. In view of the larger issues needing attention, I think it is unlikely that any provincial efforts will be made to change the status quo regarding this issue. Coordinators need to insure that new teachers have accurate information about their options and make decisions at the district level about including AEFNB members.

Sharing Ideas

Several innovative ideas which might be helpful to BTIP organizers emerged either from the data or from meetings of the Steering Committee. They are listed here in the hope that they may be useful to readers of this report.

- Beginning teachers in District 18 prepared a book of advice as a reference for future participants in the BTIP.
- The District 4 coordinator issued financial statements to each of his pairs of teachers.
- Supervisors in District 12 shared some of the duties of the BTIP coordinator.
- Mentors in District 15 were asked to keep a journal of their mentoring experiences.
- Circulate a District BTIP Newsletter to principals and participants.
- The District 4 coordinator recruited mentors in the Spring for the following year.
- Some important lessons might be learned if coordinators compiled brief case studies of beginning teachers who leave teaching after a year in the BTIP.
- District 10,15 and16 provided information binders to their beginning teachers.

Cause for Celebration

Looking back over the past three years of the BTIP, there are a number of achievements which are worth celebrating. The number of beginning teachers being supported has grown significantly. Despite identifiable problems, the overall level of satisfaction among the various participants remains high. All anglophone districts are finally participating in all aspects of the BTIP. The Steering Committee has published and distributed a brochure which outlines the goals and benefits of the BTIP. A handbook, called "A Guide to the New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program" has been prepared and circulated to all district coordinators prior to the 1998-99 school year. Beginning in 1998, mentors received certificates, and letters of commendation were placed in their personnel files. The Steering Committee now includes coordinators from each participating district. Approximately 85% of the beginning teachers were rehired in their districts. Finally, most beginning teachers indicate that the BTIP has provided valuable support to them during their first year of teaching.

Recommendations

1. The Steering Committee should seek ways to provide additional training and support for district coordinators at the provincial level. One option is to organize a Coordinators' Workshop which would focus on such topics as financial accounting, mentor recruitment and selection, improving public relations and communication with principals, and sharing ideas and strategies for planning inservice sessions with partner teachers.

2. The Chair of the Steering Committee should advise superintendents and/or directors of education of the importance of continuity among BTIP coordinators and of the need to insure that these individuals are provided adequate time and resources to perform their tasks.

3. The Chair of the Steering Committee should also encourage executive officers to appoint suitable BTIP coordinators in the Spring so they can make preparations when they have the most effect.

4. Encourage coordinators to hold information sessions with principals to outline options for their involvement in the BTIP. In addition to encouraging their participation, coordinators should keep principals well informed of ongoing BTIP activities within the district.

5. Before the end of the school year, coordinators should convene a meeting of administrators who will be involved with mentor selection in the district. The considerations for mentor selection should be reviewed and plans made for mentor recruitment.

6. Before the end of the school year, coordinators and/or administrators should provide information sessions and possibly limited inservice to any teachers interested in acting as mentors. In this way a pool of mentors can be established to support both new teachers who have been hired and those who will join the faculty later.

7. Continue to solicit mentors from volunteer teachers (not principals) who have at least 5 years teaching experience, show a personal interest in the program, demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, display above average teaching skills, and have similar teaching assignments in the same school as their partners.

8. District Coordinators should be expected to provide a Fall Orientation Workshop for mentors and beginning teachers. In addition, one or more opportunities for group interaction and/or training are recommended at the district level during the school year.

9. Every new mentor should be expected to attend an inservice session which provides details of the Program goals, expectations, funding, and activities recommended for partners. Special arrangements may have to be made to accommodate late-comers.

10. The Steering Committee should continue to seek ways to streamline and simplify BTIP funding arrangements at the district level for organizers and participants.

11. The Steering Committee should develop contingency plans to deal with the problems created by rapid expansion of the BTIP.

12. Coordinators should be asked to continue to coordinate an annual evaluation of the BTIP in their districts, both for their own benefit and that of the Steering Committee.

13. The UNBSJ representative on the Steering Committee, in consultation with other Committee members, should continue to develop appropriate questionnaires, analyse their contents, and provide a written report to the Chair of the Steering Committee.

References

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (1994). Mentoring the new teacher. [video series]. Alexandria, VA: author

Ganser, T. (1996). What do mentors say about mentoring? Journal of Staff Development, 17 (3), 36-39.

Huffman, G. & Leak, S. (1986). Beginning teachers perceptions of mentors. Journal of Teacher Education, 37 (1) , 22 - 24.

Huling-Austin, L. (1986). What can and cannot reasonably be expected from teacher induction programs. Journal of Teacher Education, 37 (1) , 2 - 5.

Saphier, J., & Gower, R. (1987). The skillful teacher: Building your teaching skills.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. (1992). Building for success: Assisting beginning teachers -- a guide for administrators. Saskatoon, SK: Author.

Scott, N. (1996). A report on the 1995-96 beginning teacher induction program in New Brunswick.. Fredericton, NB: Department of Education.

Scott, N. (1997). Report on the 1996-97 beginning teacher induction program in New Brunswick. Fredericton, NB: Department of Education.

Scott N., Smith, L., & Grobe, C. (1995). Final report on the 1993-94 beginning teacher induction pilot program. Fredericton, NB: Department of Education.